



The 30%



👁 41 ✓ 0 ★ 1

Chapter 1 by Alex Munro

'Are you sure it's gonna be alright?'

'Look. We've got an order to complete, right?'

'Yeah.'

'So, he's defective merchandise. 30% under spec?'

'Right. But, the paperwork? Surely...'

'Paperwork? You think people read that garbage? He has all the major limbs in the right places. Scan says his internals check out.'

'But he might suffer terminal mental anguish. If you can't find anything wrong with his extremities, it could be his brain that's damaged. He may just wake up screaming, and never stop. I've seen it happen.'

'So, we pull all the plugs. Terminate his bio-signals. Mercykill. Flatline the fucker. We don't have time for this; we're behind schedule as it is. Wake him up. Let's see if our birthling's ready to work... or die.'

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'Wake up!'

'Wake up, you dumb bastard!'

A sharp sound, then pain.

'I don't think he hears you.'

'He'd better. Open your eyes, you dumb son of a genetube. It's your birthday.'

'No, don't slap him again, I think he's coming round.'

I'm aware of sensations all around me, some of them, I think, I control.

'He's opening his eyes.'

HURTS. What is this thing that screams into me. Why does it want to hurt me?

'Doesn't like the light, does he? Grab an arm, Jez, and help me dump this worthless piece of waste into the chembath. Clean him up.'

Things feel light, strange tinglings all around.

'I've been working at this job all my life. And you know what still gets to me?'

'No.'

'How they give clones genitals. I mean, they're purely decoration.'

'Let's see how he takes to getting them wet.'

Two holes open. One makes a sound.

'Stop screaming AF-10997, this ain't such a bad welcome to the world.'

'Is that? He has, he's shit himself!'

'I'm not cleaning that up. Maybe we should have killed him after all.'

Basic VocabEnd Transmission

Basic ArithmeticEnd Transmission

Skills - MotorEnd Transmission

Skills - WorkerEnd Transmission

Skills - Social 1End Transmission

Miscellaneous - Level 1Done

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Spiralling colours arc across a vast darkness. This fades into grey relief.

Thoughts buzz between my ears at a speed I can't determine, the speed of learning. My head begins to ache, nails of knowledge hammered into my forehead.

'How are you feeling, AF – 10997?'

I open my eyes. Standing in front of me is a female, dressed all in red. I recognise the uniform as technician, second class.

'Fine,' I reply.

'Good, good.' The female technician walks over to a weighted pulley device. 'Stand up, please.'

I stand, uncertainly at first, then steady myself; getting accustomed to balancing.

'You see that white line on the floor?' asks the woman. 'Walk as straight as you can towards me, following the line, then lift these weights.'

I do as she asks, growing steadily more confident with my movements.

The female technician turns her back to me, and writes something down. 'Co-ordination seems fine. We were a bit concerned about your abilities. You had an awkward birthing you see,'

I feel obliged to say something, 'nnnnnnnggggg.'

The technician laughs. 'You can release the weights now. I've finished.'

'Thank you,' I say, releasing my grip. The weights drop home with a heavy clank.

'Well, everything seems to check out. There are still some tests to be done, just to determine your memory capacity, but, other than that, there's no good reason you shouldn't be at work within the next two days.'

'Work?' I asked, curiously puzzled. In the last couple of hours I had just been born, and now I'm being told that instead of enjoying my new life with all the pleasurable sensations that surround me, I'm going to be sent to work.

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say you have a lot to learn, but I think the opposite would be more appropriate.'

'I'm sorry,' I apologised, out of common courtesy.

'No offence taken, I assure you. Just keep your thoughts to a minimum, and keep them to yourself. That way you'll fit in just splendidly.'

'Understood,' I lied. My first day and already life was going to be hell.

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